



WHO ARE WE?

The Coalition to Ban Depleted Uranium (CBDU) is an American organization that emerged from the international movement to ban radioactive weapons of war, as represented by the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons, ICBUW. CBDU serves as an umbrella organization for the various groups in this country dedicated to the abolition of the use of depleted uranium (DU) as a weapon of war. Our position is that DU represents an unacceptable hazard to civilians - including women, children and the elderly - and soldiers, and results in significant and long-term damage to the environment in the areas in which such weapons are used.

It is not the CBDU's position that war, except for the use of this one weapon, is acceptable. We oppose wars, including wars perpetrated by the U.S. such as the Iraq War, as unacceptable aggression (though they are frequently sold to the public as idealistic crusades). We look forward to the day when war itself will be abolished. Since that day has not yet come, we will do our best to see that this particularly odious, destructive and dangerous weapon is permanently eliminated from the arsenals of all nations, including the U.S.

We welcome donations to help us continue our work. Please make your check or money order out to CBDU and send to CBDU, c/o Florence Gold, 750 Kappock St. #505, Bronx, NY 10463. If you have any question about DU, or comments about our newsletter, please contact David Baldwin at 917-517-8404.

Contaminated Forever

An Interview with Wes Rehberg

by David Baldwin

Filmmaker Wes Rehberg, on his website <http://www.wildclearing.com> says, "We, Eileen and Wes Rehberg, are longtime activists and artists with credentials in investigative work that documents social, economic and political situations and their effects on people. Through Wild Clearing, our work continues." They have just released "Contaminated Forever", a new video about the effects of DU and attempts by various individuals and groups to ban the weapon.

DB: You and your wife Eileen have been involved in many social causes and you yourself have made documentaries on other issues, such as homelessness. What drew you to the Depleted Uranium issue as a filmmaker? What was the spark behind this decision?

WR: Tennessee is a major producer of DU munitions [through the local corporation, Aerojet Ordnance Of Tennessee] and when I started to learn about this after moving to Tennessee, I realized that this whole issue had been passed over. I had no idea at all about it before moving here. I looked at it as an issue to explore. I think it's been covered up in Tennessee and throughout the world.

DB: How long did it take you to put the documentary together and where did you get the funds?

WR: We financed it personally, for about \$14,000. I started in May [2007] and it was released March 3rd [2008]... my wife's birthday.

DB: When you say, "released", what does that mean? Will the documentary be shown theatrically? Will it be shown on television?

WR: I sent it off to Free Speech TV and to various festivals. We may have a theatrical showing in Chattanooga at the Barking Legs theatre here, and it's scheduled to be screened during the "Building a New World Conference" in Virginia in May [see <http://www.wpaconference.org/>] Also, the documentary has been accepted for screening at the First Take Film Festival in Augusta, GA, this month (April).

DB: What is the significance of Dr. Doug Rokke to this movement?

WR: He's the *key* person. He was in Iraq and was considered *the* expert in this area, but since then they've tried to discredit him. Before he spoke out about DU, he was highly regarded by the military for his expertise. The military now claims he is a charlatan. He showed us proof that's carefully documented... including that of his own poor health. Before the Jonesboro rally, Doug came last May to East Tennessee State University and proponents of DU munitions attempted to say that he was a fraud; they contacted the university and told the organizers that they should not host him.

DB: In the excerpt I saw, depicting the rally in Jonesboro against DU, there's a lot of noise going on in the background, which seems to be an attempt to shout down the speakers. What was that about?



Eight-year-old Safaa, at the entrance to a Baghdad hospital where she was being treated for leukemia. She had lost her hair because of the anti-cancer medication she had been taking. Incidents of cancer and birth defects among infants and children in Iraq have skyrocketed since the 1991 Gulf War, a phenomenon many have attributed to radioactive contamination due to the use of depleted uranium weapons by American forces. (Photo by Takashi Morizumi from the book *A Different Nuclear War: Children of the Gulf War.*)

DU NEWS

Below are news items from the past few weeks, compiled from the Web, dealing with the depleted uranium issue. We have provided URL links to all the stories below. Keep in mind that linked pages may have been deleted or archived after the stories were retrieved. In some cases, registration at the website may be necessary to view the linked page.

"Winter Soldier" Veteran Condemns DU Use

At the recent Winter Soldier hearings - sponsored by Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and held at the National Labor College at Silver Springs, Maryland - in which veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns spoke about their experiences of war, ex-Marine Matt Howard recounted his experience of depleted uranium (<http://www.ivaw.org/wintersoldier/testimony/breakdown-military/matt-howard/video>). Howard witnessed, on the day the invasion began in March 2003, a nearby tank, crossing into Iraq, being destroyed by a U.S. helicopter gunship with a missile armed with depleted uranium. (The soldiers inside the M-1 escaped.) According to his testimony, Howard's request to the military to be tested for depleted uranium, due to exposure because of his proximity to the attacked tank, was denied. Said Howard, "[DU] is the Agent Orange of this occupation... This weapon has no purpose in Iraq... Let's be clear here: depleted uranium is an anti-armor weapon. The Iraqis do not have armor... We're poisoning our soldiers. We're poisoning the people of Iraq. But make no mistake: we're poisoning the world!" (3/17/08)

Iraq Conference on Cancer Cites DU Contamination as Cause

According to a story by Voices of Iraq, quoted on the uruknet.info website (<http://uruknet.info/?p=m41492&s1=h1>), medical experts at a conference held at Basra on February 25th on the topic of cancer in Southern Iraq surmised that radioactive pollution caused by the wars of the last two decades are responsible for an increase in incidents of the disease in that area. Said Jawad Al-Ali, a dermatologist and oncologist, "We can blame no one here [for the increase in incidents of cancer], because the essential impulse that causes a peak cancer is radioactive pollution... There is an

impression supported by evidence that in southern Iraq, particularly in Basra province, that a rapid increase in cancer cases is occurring." Said Khajak Wartanian, an environment pollution researcher, "Radioactive pollution is a prime factor in the increase in cancer cases in Basra. The problem started in 1991 when coalition forces used depleted uranium ammunitions to attack Iraqi armed forces in their Operation Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait... According to our research, the majority of cancer patients in Basra live close to polluted areas... These places were either attacked with depleted uranium ammunitions or were used as storage yards for devastated military vehicles. People don't understand the threat these equipments and vehicles pose to their lives." (2/26/08)

Duluth Veteran Insists That His Disability Stems from Exposure to DU

Brandon Stahl, in the Duluth News Tribune, profiled former Army Corporal John Marshall, who claims to be suffering multiple illnesses from exposure to depleted uranium he sustained during the first Gulf War (http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/articles/index.cfm?id=6249§ion=homepage&freebie_check&CFID=17239579&CFTOKEN=61637077&jsessionid=8830eef37ad64da67642)

In February 1991, Marshall was in a Bradley Fighting Vehicle when it was struck by "friendly fire" from a shell containing DU ammunition. Marshall believes that DU shrapnel from the blast pierced his lungs, infecting him with the radioactive metal. He claims that this exposure led him to become disabled, ending his military career. The symptoms he has endured - stomach ulcers, a failed thyroid gland, high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, tachycardia, arthritis, and signs of both Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis, such as twitching and memory loss - require 19 separate daily prescriptions to keep him functioning. Said Marshall, "Once I lost my health and my career, I lost my identity as a man."

Since 1983, he has participated in a government-funded study of about 80 soldiers known to have been exposed to DU. Ironically, the study concluded that "there have been no adverse clinical effects noted in these individuals related to DU" - despite Marshall's protests to the contrary. "This whole situation just infuriates me," he said. "All I want is for them to acknowledge this. I want validation." Marshall, who spends most of his time helping other veterans, intends to try to draw attention to the DU

issue, not just locally, but on a national level. He also worries that his two biological children, who have started to exhibit unusual symptoms, may have been affected by his illness. Said Marshall: "I love this country. But I'm not very proud of it right now." (3/16/08)

"Safety Testing" of DU Weapons Resumes in Scotland, Igniting Controversy

Several media outlets in the UK reported on the controversy involving the decision, by the Ministry of Defense (MoD), to resume depleted uranium shell testing at the Dundrennan range in Kirkcudbright in southwest Scotland. Reporting in the Herald, Glasgow (http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/newsdisplay.var.2108701.0.MoD_to_test_depleted_uranium_shells_in_Scotland.php; 3/11/08), correspondent Ian Bruce stated that these would be the first DU testings since they were discontinued in 2001, before which the Army fired "an average 300 rounds annually" at Dundrennan for 20 years. In a BBC News article (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/scotland/south_of_scotland/7289584.stm; 3/11/08), it was reported that environmental minister Mike Russell had criticized the MoD for the testing and said that its failure to consult local opinion was "disappointing." In The Sunday Herald, Glasgow (http://www.sundayherald.com/news/heraldnews/display.var.2123280.0.depleted_uranium_turns_earthworms_into_glowworms.php; retrieved 3/19/08), in a story entitled, "Depleted uranium turns earthworms into glowworms," Jasper Hamill reported that a study released last year in The Journal of Environmental Monitoring stated, "Many of the soil samples from the Dundrennan Firing Range had uranium concentrations and isotopic signatures indicative of contamination with DU. Furthermore, plants and earthworms collected... also had uranium isotopic signatures strongly influenced by DU, indicating that DU was indeed assimilated into biological tissues." Robin Harper, a Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Green Party, said, "There is no safe place to test these shells, and there is no appropriate battlefield to use them on either. The MoD should commit to the ban requested by the European parliament." (3/11/08)

Humanitarian Lawyer Condemns DU Testing As a Violation of Human Rights and Environmental Law

Attorney Karen Parker, founder of the Association of Humanitarian Lawyers and a legal counsel to the United Nations, has condemned the proposal of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) to expand by 800 percent its current practice of exploding toxic and radioactive materials,

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DU Truth is published quarterly by the Coalition to Ban Depleted Uranium.
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Contaminated Forever

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WR: That was a motorcycle group, mostly veterans associated with Rolling Thunder, and they had decided that this particular protest in Jonesboro was an antiwar protest (which of course it was, but the focus was actually on DU weapons) and they were there to make sure that the voices of “support for the troops” were heard.

DB: I thought Herbert Reed and the others showed great patience dealing with the hecklers. Do you know how they felt about meeting such hostility?

WR: It’s frustrating, of course, that people heckling us won’t look more deeply into these issues, but they [the speakers] are used to it.

DB: You made an attempt to contact Aerojet representatives to talk about the issue. How did that turn out?

WR: We failed. That’s just good journalism, you try to persuade the other side to talk a little bit. Previously, they declined. We made phone calls, visits, wrote preliminary letters, but they continually rebuffed any attempt at contact. They also declined participation at the press conference we held. As Cliff Kindy, an anti-DU organizer, said then, if a company is making a good product and is proud of it, there would be no reason for them not to talk to us. However, at New Colonie, New York, near Albany, many residents and former workers at NL Industries [closed by the New State Supreme Court more than 25 years ago] have been found to be carrying DU and are ill, so there is this idea of a production site also being a possible contamination site. Someone could ask: “Aren’t you afraid of contaminating workers?” They might not want to confront those questions. But I really don’t know why they didn’t speak to us.

DB: Do you think the armed forces, not to mention the politicians, of the U.S. are actually unaware of the destructive power of DU munitions, or is this a cover-up?

WR: They are aware, there’s no question about it. The EU has supported a moratorium on their use pending an investigation. As the Gulf War Syndrome issue becomes more and more prevalent, the states are stepping in to act, because the military is not addressing the issue.

DB: Iraq, since Gulf War I in 1991, has been an incredibly toxic environment, particularly since the military blew up Saddam’s stockpile of weapons at that time, which released so much junk into the atmosphere. So how can anybody tell whether the ailment that a soldier, or an Iraqi child, suffers from was caused by DU or by something else?

WR: There are sophisticated tests that have been developed both in England and in Germany. Depleted uranium has a particular isotopic signature. Mass spectrometry urine tests can detect U-238’s isotopic signature and its presence in the body, so they can determine whether the ceramic uranium oxide toxic and radioactive particles, resulting from a DU weapon’s explosion, have entered the body. Also, when a DU munition hits a tank, it bursts into flames and its metals also becomes dust-like nanoparticles, which are ingested and inhaled. Not only DU, but other metals in the target - such as iron, nickel, aluminum, steel - are inhaled or ingested. This can have a multiplier effect on the toxicity of DU.

DB: How would you respond to DU skeptics who argue that the toxic effects of depleted uranium have been deliberately exaggerated for political purposes?

WR: I think there are people in the movement who have labeled others in the movement as exaggerating the issue. That kind of critique may be justified in some cases, but when you have people who are determined to expose the treachery of this, and want to support it scientifically and through health research, it’s not an exaggerated effort. Of course this is a political issue, no matter how you look at it. And the radioactivity in depleted uranium is enough to hurt people. If DU is outside the body, the skin can block the alpha radiation from it. But if DU is inhaled or ingested, since these particles are capable of passing through cell walls, though the radiation level is low, it’s extremely damaging. It gets into the DNA and disrupts things.

DB: What would you say to the person who would claim that, despite the problems, DU weapons are extraordinarily effective in dealing with enemy targets like tanks, and thus are needed to prevent U.S. casualties?

WR: There are other heavy metals that could be used. The Navy changed its Phalanx weapons system from uranium to tungsten [in 1988]. I would prefer, of course, that there would be no more wars at all.

DB: How would you answer the argument that your documentary is only “preaching to the converted”?

WR: My hope is that we’re not just preaching to the choir. We need to get the anti-DU movement to use a multifaceted approach to get this out to the public. One of these facets is film.

DB: Do you see a common thematic thread through all your video work?

WR: I think it’s the gaps in the social safety net, the people who are not being taken care of. In the case of the homeless, it’s people who are suffering from various problems, such as in some cases substance abuse. In the case of DU, it’s the veterans that are not being taken care of. We have a responsibility to provide for those people socially. We need to close those gaps.

DB: There is some support in Congress for a banning of DU weapons, but only from a few legislators. Do you have much hope that DU will be permanently banned in the near future?

WR: Yes. I think it’s like Agent Orange; there is a tipping point where people say about an issue, “we have to look at that.” It’s on the agenda for the next General Assembly meeting in the UN in 2008. Joan Walker, an anti-DU lobbyist, has successfully lobbied the New York State legislature to pass legislation providing for a health registry and health tests for National Guard troops returning from Iraq, legislation that has not been implemented yet in the executive branch or funded, according to her. People keep bringing the issue to the fore, and other people will see that these illnesses have a cause.

DB: What do you intend to do now that the documentary has been released?

WR: We will continue to be part of that effort now, after completing the documentary. We can follow up [in other ways than film].

DB: What advice would you give to anti-DU activists worldwide?

WR: Keep at it. Just keep at it. ■

CBDU HISTORY OF ACTIVITIES

9/05	Inaugural meeting of group.	Humanist Roundtable held at the Community Church in New York. Rev. Lucius Walker of Pastors for Peace is in attendance and signs on with the CBDU.	International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW) in Japan.
11/15/05	First public forum presented at the Riverdale-Yonkers Society For Ethical Culture. Presentations by Herbert Reed, Gerard Matthew, Dr. Glen Lawrence and NY State Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz.	4/25/06 Florence and Carl are invited to participate in a second Humanist Roundtable on environmental terrorism.	11/11/06 Dinowitz' DU Testing bill is signed into law.
2/7/06	CBDU co-chairs Florence Gold and Carl Lundgren and CBDU member Paul Brown travel to Albany at the invitation of Assembly Member Dinowitz to attend his press conference on the DU testing bill. The group also lobbies other state legislators.	6/12/06 CBDU presents a second forum at the Riverdale-Yonkers Society for Ethical Culture, with Frida Berrigan, Rev. Lucius Walker and Sgt Ray Ramos, who was featured in the movie "Poison Dust."	2/5 - 2/6/07 Gerard Matthew is featured in a CNN interview.
3/28/06	Florence and Carl speak at a	8/3 - 8/6/06 Herbert Reed participates in the annual international DU conference sponsored by The	9/10/07 Ray Ramos is featured on the Montel Williams Show.
			10/2 - 10/3/07 Florence attends the annual ICBUW conference at the U.N. Church and meets with DU activists from other countries. ICBUW Director Doug Weir later contacts CBDU and requests that the group help organize DU groups in the United States.

DU News (Continued from Page 2)

for test purposes, into the air in the San Francisco Bay area. Such detonations - which now include 60 dangerous materials, including DU - have occurred since 1955. But recently, the LLNL has applied for a permit for an eight-fold increase in the force of such explosions, to up to 350 lbs. per detonation. In an interview with Cathy Garger at the Axis of Logic website (http://axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/article_26286.shtml), Parker asserted that UN resolution 1997/36 covers nuclear testing such as the detonations proposed by the LLNL. Although "it's not as clear as actual use in combat... I would argue that there is an inherent violation of human rights if a weapon that releases dangerous substances is tested in an area where there are people who could be negatively affected. From that perspective, carrying out, say, a Depleted Uranium test, open air, in the Bay area is a crime - a violation of international law from the perspective of the right to life, the right

to health and those kinds of rights." She also pointed out that US law, particularly environmental law, would also cover such testing. "The release of dangerous substances is, in a sense, automatically a violation of what we call domestic law or tort law. It's a strict liability violation, meaning there's no defense... It's as if the United States wasn't properly maintaining a dam and the dam burst. The US can't use any arguments in its defense, saying well we didn't have adequate budget for maintenance. It's strict liability. The dam busts, you're liable." (3/18/08)

DU May Have Caused Award-Winning Journalist's Blindness

Paul William Roberts, the Senior Writer for the Atlantic Free Press, announced on his website that during 2007 he lost his vision in both eyes (<http://atlanticfreepress.com/content/view/3593/81/>). In a blog article entitled "Annus Horribilis" ("The Horrible Year"), the Welsh-born, Canadian-based journalist and novelist - winner of numerous awards, including the Paul Kidd Award for Courage in Journalism from the writers organization, PEN - reported that holes began to appear in the retina of his right eye in June, followed by the left eye six months later. The source of his affliction is as yet unknown. However, Roberts has expressed the suspicion, confirmed as plausible by two (unnamed) eye specialists, that the cause may well have been "prolonged exposure" to DU during his coverage of the Iraq War in 2003, "which has been causing various bodily ailments since 2004, debilitating flues, nausea and chronic fatigue being previous highlights." Roberts is a highly vocal critic of the Bush administration and of the invasion of Iraq. It is not certain when or if he will be able to resume his career. (3/20/08)



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